

The New Britain Educational Administration Center
Office of the District Coordinator of
Science, Technology and Applied Education
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Dear State of CT Legislative Appropriations Committee:

The Consolidated School District of New Britain's summer youth employment and learning program is an outgrowth of our District's application to the Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) request for grant proposals to design and provide summer program activities and services for in-school youth between the ages of 14 and 19. New Britain's program known as FHITEC was developed by a community collaborative effort between the New Britain Consolidated School District, New Britain Mayor Tim Stewart's office and CCSU's Institute of Technology and Business Development.

Over the past six years this partnership has demonstrated enormous success through collaborative ventures involving the development and implementation of innovative programs for New Britain's youth. The FHITEC Tiers I, II, and III programs, conducted during Summers 2004-2009 involved approximately 670 primarily economically disadvantaged youth, from New Britain High School and E.C. Goodwin Technical School. These students received training in the fields of Financial services, Healthcare, Information Technology, Engineering, Bioscience, Education, Hospitality, Entrepreneurial and Environmental Careers (FHITEC) and were placed in related worksites within the community. Each career pathway exploration connected learning with real-life applications and reinforced skill development in mathematics, science, and language arts through experiential and contextual learning. The students learned about what careers are in demand, what each requires in terms of education and experience, and the rewards that each job offers both in financial terms, and in terms of personal fulfillment.

All the participants worked with computers to document their acquisition of CWP Career Competencies as well as to build their personal electronic career portfolios and to meet their technology and career planning graduation requirements.

Of the students that participated in the FHITEC summer experience 95% have completed the program. Written performance evaluations conducted by FHITEC staff were administered at the mid-point and end of each program. All students received Final Performance Evaluation ratings in Behavior, Attitude, and Productivity. The vast majority of students received "Excellent" scores in each category as rated by the program staff. A Participant Satisfaction Survey revealed that 99% of the students felt that the program provided them with employment skills for professional growth, 100% of the students expressed that the program helped them to understand the importance of academic achievements, and 98% of the students found the summer experience to be enjoyable. Instructors for each career pathway administered tests to measure student growth, knowledge and skills and evaluated student performance on each of their assignments. The results indicated that 97% of the students in the FHITEC program increased their score as determined by Pre and Post Tests. In addition, most of the students had expressed interest in

enrolling in more challenging courses at NBHS including Advanced Placement (AP) and honors level math and science, and electives such as pre-engineering program courses, forensic science, emergency medical technician, business education and web design offerings.

The FHITEC worksite employers responded to an Employer Satisfaction Survey which revealed that

- 100% were satisfied with participating in FHITEC SYELP.
- 100% rated the FHITEC program staff as understanding their employment needs.
- 100% felt that the FHITEC SYELP experience served to develop the youth participants' job readiness skills.
- 100% would be willing to take part in CWP's summer employment program again.
- And 90% would be willing to retain the FHITEC students in full time positions if they had the need for additional help.

As a result of participation in the FHITEC programs many students received part-time job opportunities from the businesses where they worked during the summer. Other students have entered college and many have mentioned that these programs have been very helpful in their decision-making regarding their choice of an academic major.

Sadly though, the majority of students in today's schools do not have such opportunities. Research suggests that the nation is not adequately preparing young people to be productive workers. Part of the problem is that most young people do not see a connection between what they learn in school and their future careers. Students are not unfamiliar with the world of work. Recent national studies revealed that more than 50 percent of 16- and 17- year olds and close to 70 percent of 12th graders are employed part-time, especially during the summer. But few of these experiences lead students to connect what they do in school with what they do on the job, leaving them clueless about the range of skills and knowledge required to succeed in today's job market.

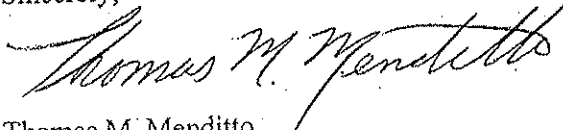
As substantiated by the success of New Britain's FHITEC summer youth program, schools alone cannot provide students with the necessary combination of academic, technical, and employability skills. They need the support and cooperation of the business community and institutions of higher education in forming a partnership that can create learning opportunities that expose young people to the skills, experiences, and attitudes essential to succeed in today's global economy. From the school's perspective, the value of work-based learning is that it provides a real-world context for academic subjects. This can generate greater enthusiasm for classroom learning when they see how it relates to their future. From the employer's perspective, this association has the potential to raise the quality of entry-level workers to become productive employees.

Considering the prevalence of poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, and other risk factors of New Britain's youth, this population stands to benefit immensely from the continuation of programs such as FHITEC that are aimed at improving academic and work-place skills, and providing students with opportunities to develop the ability to demonstrate basic social responsibility, sense of purpose, empowerment, and employability skills. Successful

initiatives, such as New Britain's FHITEC program, are critical to a healthy educational system and economy in New Britain and throughout the State of Connecticut.

For these reasons I respectfully request your support to retain the \$3.5 million and to further increase the level of funding of the Summer Youth Employment Appropriation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Thomas M. Menditto". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Thomas M. Menditto
District Coordinator of Science,
Technology and Applied Education
Consolidated School District of New Britain

Need in Community

The Consolidated School District of New Britain serves over 10,000 students annually. The mission of the School District is to provide a rigorous and relevant, high-quality, research-based, data-driven education that meets the intellectual, physical, moral, and social development needs of every child. The District provides a rich educational environment with high expectations for all students.

New Britain children come from a broad demographic spectrum, the majority of whom, 78 % are from communities of color. The New Britain Public Schools face the daunting challenge of educating one of the neediest student populations in the State.

One-third of the adult population (25 years of age or older) in New Britain does not have a high school diploma (U.S. Census, 2000). The cumulative four-year dropout rate for the class of 2007 was 26.1%, which is over four times the dropout rate for the state as a whole (Connecticut State Department of Education, Strategic School Profiles 2007-2008). Even students who have earned their high school diploma are often unemployed at the time of graduation in New Britain.

In addition to the significant dropout rate, there are many other risk factors that create an extreme educational and economic disadvantage for the youth of New Britain, such as the high poverty rate, the percentage of families receiving TANF (state cash assistance), a significant percentage of children born to teen mothers, and a high unemployment rate. 63% of students in the New Britain Public Schools are eligible for free or reduced meals, compared to only 29% for the state (Strategic Schools Profile: 2007-2008). Over Twenty percent of families with related children fall below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2000), and 14% of the students in the city's school system have special needs (Strategic School Profiles 2007-2008). The Nation's teen employment in the past 3 months was only 26%, down 19 percentage points since 2000, marking a new post-World War II historic low.

The Consolidated School District of New Britain has recently incorporated Capital Workforce Partners career competencies into its New Britain High School Graduation Requirements beginning with the Class of 2015.